

Note: This document represents my first attempt at teaching a course like this. This was the handbook I handed out on the first day of class. We were not able to make it through this entire course in *one semester* – however, the School Board approved a change in the curriculum that essentially took this outline and expanded over two years.

Rock and Roll Methods

Course Description and Expectations – Fall 2009

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Course Description

This course will help students to analyze, compose, and record their own musical compositions. The class will cover song styles, musical forms, and techniques in genres ranging from blues, folk, rock and roll, rhythm & blues, pop, and hip-hop. Students will be assessed in a variety of ways: written and listening exams, musical analysis, written papers, reflections, and their own musical compositions. Students in the class will learn how to play guitar and how to utilize digital recording software. The final project for the class will be an album comprising of compositions written, recorded, and produced by the class.

In brief, Rock and Roll Methods seeks to make students engaged in the music around them. My hope is by providing students with the tools to both evaluate and create music, they will use that sense of curiosity and attention to detail in areas outside of the classroom.

Materials

Provided by the school:

Textbook: *Elements of Music* - Joseph Straus

Software: Audacity & Finale Notepad

Provided by the student:

Pencil, spiral or composition notebook, home computer access*, mp3 player*, headphones*, guitar*, some sort of microphone*

*If the student is unable to provide these materials, every effort will be made to provide items that the student can borrow. Please let Mr. Jaworski know ASAP of any comments or concerns regarding classroom materials.

Classroom Expectations

1. You must be respectful of every person in the room – students and teachers alike.
2. You must participate in all class activities (including singing and playing guitar).
3. You must be respectful of a variety of musical styles – you not liking a particular song does not make it a bad song.
4. No food or sticky liquids during class.
5. No gum, food, or liquids while in the computer lab.
6. You are reminded to adhere to the computer usage policies of the Winnebago School District.
7. You must have your stuff for class. Announcements will be made if you have to bring in an mp3 player, guitar, or anything else.



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Attendance

Students must be in the classroom when the bell rings. If not, they will be marked as tardy. Being marked as tardy also means a lowering of your classroom participation grade for the week.

Students who are not in class will be marked as absent. Any work missed during an excused absence (as deemed by the administration) can be made up at the discretion of the teacher. While students are expected to make up the work they missed due to an unexcused absence, a grade of 0 will be given.

Grades

Both grades for individual assignments and for your overall grade will be given on the following scale:

A+ >98%	A = 92-97.9	A- = 90-91.9
B+ = 88-89.9	B = 82-87.9	B- = 80-81.9
C+ = 78-79.9	C = 72-77.9	C- = 70-71.9
D+ = 68-69.9	D = 62-67.9	D- = 60-61.9
F ≤ 59.9		

Students will be graded on homework assignments, classroom participation, written and listening exams, musical analysis, written papers, reflections, guitar knowledge, recording techniques, and their own musical compositions. Any grade based on your ability to perform (voice or guitar) will be assessed on your understanding of the skills required and the progress you've been making. Every effort will be made to allow you to be assessed on your instruments outside of the classroom if you'd feel more comfortable with that.

Since the objective of this course is teach students lifelong skills in their creation and appreciation of music, any homework assignment – completed in good faith (as determined by the teacher) – can be resubmitted. Any corrections that are made will count for half of the points. For example, if a student turns in an assignment and receives a 70%, he or she can make the corrections up to a total of 15%. The corrected assignment would then receive a revised grade of 85%. Again, this privilege will only be granted if it appears that the student has originally attempted the assignment in good faith and misapplied a concept.

Writing Implements

Whenever completing any sort of music theory homework, use a pencil. I cannot stress that enough. You will be making changes all the time and the ability to erase your work will be vital! Don't make me carry around extra copies of assignments because you didn't remember to use a pencil.

Late Assignments:

Any assignments that are turned in past the due date will automatically be deducted one letter grade for every day that they are late – up to five days. After five days, a student may turn their assignment in for half credit at any point until the midterm or final (depending on which half of the semester the assignment was due). It is recommended that any student who has missed work to make up the assignments as soon as possible – half the points are better than zero points!

Turning in Assignments

Students are allowed to turn in work to me in person or via email. However, the assignment must be completed before you walk into the classroom – I will be checking the date and time I receive the work. Additionally, please make back-up copies of your materials just in case something happens – something



usually does. While I prefer my school address to receive student work, you may try my home email in case send me mp3s of any audio files since email accounts have file size limits.

Sometimes you will be asked to save your work on the District file servers. I would recommend making a back-up of anything you create at school. A flash drive is a great way to do this. These can be purchased at very low prices. If you have any questions concerning flash drives, let me know.

Decency Standards

All materials in this class must adhere to District policies regarding appropriate materials in the classroom (Policy 6:210). This means that a song will not be studied if it contains “obscene, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, racially offensive, harassing, or illegal material.”

On a day-to-day level, I will only use material that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) would deem as appropriate for public airwaves. This means that any material played in the classroom will be without obscene language.

Students are expected to bring in materials that adhere to the same standards. That means that any music they chose to analyze for homework or any lyrics they write must be playable on the radio and reflect positively on the Winnebago School District. If you are unsure if a song is appropriate, then it probably isn't. If Mr. Jaworski determines a song to be inappropriate, he reserves the right to make the student redo the assignment with material that fulfills the requirements of the class. This may or may not result in a reduction of score. Repeated or blatant attempts to disregard the decency policies outlined here could result in disciplinary actions as deemed appropriate by the me and/or the administration.

Assignment Explanations & Expectations

Guitar Playing:

You are not expected to become a world-class guitar hero, although you could use this course as a starting point! You are, however, expected to learn about basic chord changes and to be able to switch between chords while maintaining a steady pulse. Plenty of class time will be provided to help with individual problems and I am available before or after school to address any additional questions. Please let me know ASAP when you know you're having difficulty – don't wait until the night before an assessment. It is recommended that you practice on a regular basis.

Singing

Like the guitar, you are not expected to be a top-notch vocalist. However, you ARE expected to sing in class – it is part of your grade. It's best to come to grips with that now. You will be graded on your ability to sing numerous times throughout the semester. I will try my best to demonstrate bad vocal technique in order to make everybody feel more comfortable – it's very natural for me. Just remember that nobody is judging you as a human being because of your ability to sing. The only way to get better is to go all out and try your best!

Notation Quizzes

Notation quizzes will be given throughout the semester, starting at the end of Unit One – our study of notation. A student has to receive 90% on three different notation quizzes in order to receive full credit during the semester. Students will take the quizzes weekly until they have received the necessary grade on three quizzes. Since students will be approaching notation from various levels of understanding, I am providing this method as a way to make sure that everybody understands the concepts and gets full credit for learning the material – even if it takes some longer than others.



Form Analysis

Students will be asked throughout the class to provide analyses of music that is being studied in class. These assignments focus on form and its relationship to the lyrics and harmony of the song.

Audacity and Recording Assignments

For some assignments throughout the semester you will be required to utilize Audacity. This is available online for free. I will also be providing each student with their own copy. You are encouraged to play around with this before any assignments are due. Technical issues at home are not an excuse for not having an assignment completed. Computers are available at the school and I will provide time in class to use them. I will also provide lab times for students to come in after school and work on their projects. I'll be able to offer you with additional assistance at those times.

Class Album

Our goal is to create an album using our original compositions and then decide how we want to distribute it. That would truly be the ultimate culmination of a class entitled 'Rock and Roll Methods'. We can only get there if all students in the class keep up with the required work and truly put the effort into understanding the class content. This project would require a lot of group interaction and would be a great way to finish the class. I encourage everybody to keep plugging away! We could make a physical Compact Disc recording and share it with our friends and/or we could put it online and sell it for a charity of our choosing. The options are only limited by the class' collective interest, enthusiasm, and creativity.

Your Intellectual Property and Creative Rights

Obviously, the goal is to have you creating your own musical compositions. It is important to remember that these songs are your intellectual property and that you have a right to determine who has the ability to share them. During Unit Nine we will discuss various ways that allow you to protect or share your creations legally through copyright or the use of a Creative Commons license. In case you're interested in learning what your options are right away, you can visit <http://creativecommons.org/about/licenses/>.



Tentative Units of Study

Unit One: Basic Elements of Notation and Theory

Students will be introduced to the basic concepts that they will need to understand in order to both analyze and write music. Topics will include the introduction of the staff, clefs, key signatures, time signatures, intervals, and chords. Students will also be introduced to the piano keyboard as a way to visualize the chords their studying.

Unit Two: The Introduction of Song Structures – The 8, 12, & 16-bar Blues

Students will apply their knowledge of chords to look at various types of blues forms. Additionally, the class will examine the style of lyrics within the blues and use that information to write their own. Artists studied will include Elvis Presley, Muddy Waters, Big Joe Turner, and Michael Jackson.

Unit Three: Basic Recording Techniques

Students will learn about Audacity – a recording program they can use at home to record their performances. Topics covered will be recording, overdubbing, editing, adding effects, making mp3s, and finalizing.

Unit Four: Introduction to Guitar

Students will learn about the basic parts of the guitar, as well as the names of the strings and how to tune them properly. The class will learn how to read guitar tabs and learn their first set of chords – centering around the key of C Major.

Unit Five: Cadences and Chordal Relationships

Students will be introduced to the various types of cadences and be asked to identify them both aurally and visually. The class will then analyze songs in an effort to find any standard chordal relationships that might exist in popular music.

Unit Six: AABA Form

Students will learn about a musical form that took hold after the blues and was popular in the 1950's and 1960's – AABA (32-Bar Form) and it's extended form (AABABA). Students will investigate the differences between verses, choruses, refrains, and bridges. Artists studied include The Beatles, Billy Joel, Jerry Lee Lewis, The Mamas and the Pappas, and Judy Garland.

Unit Seven: More Guitar Instruction

In addition to other new chords, students will be introduced to bar chords which should allow students to play in a wide variety of keys.

Unit Eight: Exploration of Other Musical Instruments

The class will briefly spend some time understanding the basic components of a rock beat. Students will spend some time with a drum set learning more about the sounds of the drums, how they contribute to the overall feel of a song, and how they can help in your song writing.

Unit Nine: Songwriting Workshop

Students will start going through the process of exploring their own musical expressions. Guidance will be given through further examination of modern musical forms. Students will be submitting song ideas and will be coached through “writer’s block” with help from the teacher and peers.

Unit Ten: Winnebago Studios

Students will start the process of rehearsing and recording music for our final project. How this plays out is anybody's guess. In addition to recording and rehearsing, we will discuss intellectual property rights, formats in which to release our music, and our release party!



Student Signature

By signing this document and returning it, I am stating that:

- I have read all of the information in this packet and have shared it with my parent or legal guardian.
- I understand the expectations of Music Theory.
- I understand that I should direct any questions regarding this class to Mr. Jaworski as soon as the questions arise.

Signature _____

Date _____

Printed Name _____

Email _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

My son or daughter has brought home their copy of the Music Theory course description and have shared its contents with me.

Signature _____

Date _____

Printed Name _____

Remember to turn this page in no later than September 4th.

